

Type 2 Diabetes

A VA Clinician's Quick Reference Guide to Diabetes Management in Primary Care (2020)







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Abbreviations

ASCVD: atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease

BG: blood glucose

CKD: chronic kidney disease

COPD: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

CVD: cardiovascular disease

dL: deciliter

DPP-4: dipeptidyl peptidase-4

eGFR: estimated glomerular filtration rate

FPG: fasting plasma glucose

FIB: fibrosis

G6PD: glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase

GI: gastrointestinal

GLP-1: glucagon-like peptide-1

gm: gram

HbA1c: hemoglobin A1c

HF: heart failure

kg: kilogram

LVH: left ventricular hypertrophy

mcg: microgram

MEN2: multiple endocrine neoplasia syndrome type 2

mg: milligram

MTC: medullary thyroid carcinoma

NYHA: New York Heart Association

SGLT-2: sodium glucose co-transporter-2

TZD: thiazolidinediones

UACR urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio

UTI: urinary tract infection

XR: extended release

Diagnosing prediabetes and type 2 diabetes:1

Status	Fasting Plasma Glucose (FPG)*§ or Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c)*
Normal	FPG < 100 mg/dL; HbA1c < 5.7%
Prediabetes	FPG \geq 100 mg/dL and $<$ 126 mg/dL on 2 occasions or HbA1c \geq 5.7% and FPG \geq 100 mg/dL and $<$ 126 mg/dL or 2-hour plasma glucose 140 - 199 mg/dL (IGT)
Diabetes	FPG \geq 126 mg/dL on 2 occasions or HbA1c \geq 6.5% and a confirmatory FPG \geq 126 mg/dL or HbA1c \geq 7.0% on 2 occasions

^{*}Fasting is defined as no caloric intake for at least 8 hours. § FPG is the preferred test for diagnosis, but either of the two listed tests is acceptable. In the absence of unequivocal hyperglycemia with acute metabolic decompensation, one of these two tests should be done on different days. *Using a clinical laboratory (not a point-of-care) methodology standardization to the National Glycohemoglobin Standardization Program (NGSP).

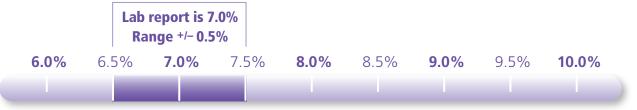
IGT: impaired glucose tolerance during oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT).

See the VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for the Management of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus in Primary Care (2017) for more information.

Important considerations for the HbA1c test²

- Reliability of HbA1c measurements depend on the lifespan of red blood cells.
- High red blood cell turnover such as in hemolytic anemia, acute blood loss, erythropoietin treatment, and dialysis can all result in falsely low HbA1c.
- Low red blood cell turnover, such as in vitamin deficiencies and chronic kidney disease, can result in a falsely high HbA1c.

- In these cases, an FPG or an oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT) are preferred for diagnosis.
- A single HbA1c measurement should be thought of as a range and not an absolute value. Therefore, an HbA1c of 7.0% could be anywhere in the range of 6.5 to 7.5%. This is due to the accuracy of the laboratory test. Keep this in mind when determining an HbA1c target range for a patient and if adjustments in therapy are needed.



HbA1c targets

Individual target ranges may vary based on clinical judgment and Veteran preferences. Use shared-decision making to help the Veteran explore and compare treatment options to determine their optimal care plan.

Selecting and adjusting an HbA1c treatment target²

Major comorbidities¹ or physiologic age	Microvascular complications					
iviajor comorbidities or physiologic age	Absent or mild ²	Moderate ³	Advanced⁴			
Absent*: > 10-15 years of life expectancy	6-7%	7-8%	7.5-8.5%			
Present⁵: 5-10 years of life expectancy	7-8%	7.5-8.5%	7.5-8.5%			
Marked ⁶ : < 5 years of life expectancy	8-9%	8-9%	8-9%			

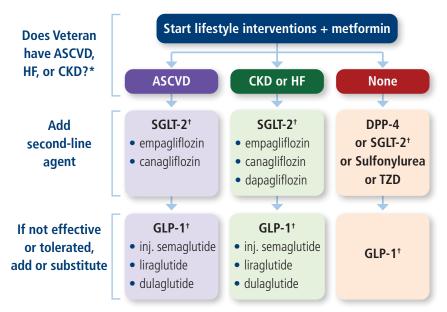
^{*} Progression to major complications of diabetes is likely to occur in individuals with longer than 15-20 years of life expectancy. Therefore, goal ranges are more beneficial early in disease in younger individuals, or healthier older adults with a longer life expectancy. The super-scripted numbers in the table above correlate to the comorbidities and microvascular complications listed on Page 6.

Comorbidities and microvascular complications (from previous page)

- 1 Major comorbidity: significant CVD, severe CKD, severe COPD, severe chronic liver disease, recent stroke, and/or life-threatening malignancy
- ² Mild microvascular disease: early background retinopathy, and/or microalbuminuria and/or mild neuropathy
- ³ **Moderate microvascular disease:** pre-proliferative retinopathy or persistent, fixed proteinuria (macroalbuminuria), and/or demonstrable peripheral neuropathy (sensory loss)
- ⁴ Advanced microvascular disease: severe non-proliferative retinopathy, or proliferative retinopathy and/or renal insufficiency (serum creatinine > 2.0mg/dL), and/or insensate extremities or autonomic neuropathy (e.g., gastroparesis, impaired sweating, orthostatic hypotension)
- ⁵ Major comorbidity is present but is not end-stage and management is achievable.
- ⁶ Major comorbidity is present and is either end-stage or management is significantly challenging. This can include mental health conditions and substance/opioid use.

Social determinants of health, including social support, ability to self-monitor on insulin, food insufficiency, and cognitive impairment need to be considered. Additionally, side effects of medications and patient preferences need to be considered in the process of shared decision making.

Algorithm for initiating and advancing pharmacotherapy for type 2 diabetes¹



If HbA1c is > 9%, consider starting basal insulin at any step.

- * Agents shown to reduce ASCVD risk: SGLT-2 inhibitors (empagliflozin, canagliflozin); GLP-1 agonists (injectable semaglutide, liraglutide, dulaglutide). GLP-1s have not been shown to lower heart failure risk (neutral outcome). Dapagliflozin has been shown to lower heart failure risk and CKD risk, but neutral for ASCVD.
- † Indicates referral to individual Criteria for Use.

 Do not combine a DPP-4 inhibitor with a GLP-1 agonist.

Not shown in the figure are uncommonly-used agents (e.g., alpha-glucosidase inhibitors, meglitinides, pramlintide, inhaled insulin, etc.), but these may be considered in specific situations. Refer to Criteria for Use for pramlintide and inhaled insulin: www.pbm.va.gov

ASCVD: indicators are age ≥ 55 years with coronary, carotid, or lower extremity artery stenosis > 50% or LVH. **CKD:** eGFR 30-60 mL/min/1.73m² or UACR > 30 mg/g, particularly UACR > 300 mg/g. **HF:** left ventricular ejection fraction < 45%.

Select pharmacotherapy based on Veteran characteristics^{1,4-13}

Class	Medication	HbA1c	CV out	tcomes	Renal	Weight	Нуро-	Possible side effects/	
Class	Medication	lowering %	ASCVD	HF	outcome	change	glycemia	considerations	
Biguanide	metformin metformin XR	1-1.5	Possible benefit	*	*	Loss/ Neutral (-1.1 kg)	No	 GI side effects common Risk for B12 deficiency Lactic acidosis (rare) 	
P-4 inhibito	linagliptin sitagliptin	0.5-1	Neutral	Neutral	*	Neutral (-0.4 to 0.55 kg)	No	PancreatitisHypersensitivity reactions	
	alogliptin saxagliptin			Potential risk				ArthralgiasBullous pemphigoid	

Formulary medications in bold. Not all products listed may be available on VA National Formulary and may require non-formulary request or prior authorization request. To view VA National Formulary: https://www.pbm.va.gov/PBM/NationalFormulary.asp. *No data available.

Class	Medication	HbA1c	CV out	comes	Renal	Weight	Нуро-	Possible side effects/
Class	Medication	lowering %	ASCVD	HF	outcome	change	glycemia	considerations
tor agonists	inj. semaglutide liraglutide dulaglutide	1-1.5	Benefit	Neutral	Benefit	Loss/ (-0.28 to 3.2 kg)†	No	 Contraindicated in those with personal or family history of MTC or those with MEN2 GI side effects common
GLP-1 receptor	exenatide lixisenatide oral semaglutide		Neutral	Neutral	*			Possible pancreatitisHypersensitivityImmunogenicityAcute kidney injury

[†] Semaglutide injection appears to produce the most weight loss among the GLP-1 agonists.

Select pharmacotherapy based on Veteran characteristics^{1,4-13}

Class	Medication	HbA1c	CV outcomes		Renal	Weight	Нуро-	Possible side effects/
Class	Medication	lowering %	ASCVD	HF	outcome	change	glycemia	considerations
inhibitors	empagliflozin canagliflozin		Benefit	Benefit	Benefit	efit Loss		 Genital mycotic infections UTI Ketoacidosis
SGLT-2 inhil	dapagliflozin	0.5-1 [±]	Neutral	Benefit	Benefit	(-1.8 to 3.3 kg)	No	 Volume depletion Acute kidney injury Fournier's Gangrene Bone fractures (canagliflozin)
	ertugliflozin		*	*	*			Amputation (canagliflozin)

Formulary medications in bold. *No data available. **Meta-analysis of short-term trials indicated a potential risk of CV events compared to placebo; however, this was not confirmed in a long-term trial. ± The effect of SGLT-2 inhibitors in lowering glucose levels is reduced in patients with renal impairment. Despite this, the cardiovascular and renal benefits of SGLT-2 inhibition are maintained to an eGFR as low as 30 mL/min/1.73m².

Class	Medication	HbA1c	CV ou	tcomes	Renal	Weight	Нуро-	Possible side effects/	
Class	Medication	lowering %	ASCVD	HF	outcome	change	glycemia	considerations	
Sulfonylureas	glipizide glimepiride	1-1.5	Possible harm	*	*	Gain (1-5.5 kg)	Yes	 Increased risk of hypoglycemia in elderly or renal impairment Hemolytic anemia may occur if G6PD deficiency 	
TZDs	pioglitazone	1-1.5	Possible benefit	Increased risk	*	Gain	No	 Contraindicated in NYHA Class 3 or 4 HF Bone fractures in womer Edema Bladder cancer (pioglitazone) 	
	rosiglitazone		Possible harm**	Increased risk	*	(2.6-4.8 kg)			

Renal dosing for glucose-lowering medications^{1,14-33}

Class	Medication	Starting	Maximum	A	ction if eGFR (m	L/min/1.73m²	')
Class	Medication	daily dose	daily dose	> 45 to < 60	> 30 to < 45	> 15 to < 30	< 15 or ESRD
Biguanide	metformin metformin XR	500 mg BID (IR) or 850 mg daily (IR) or 500mg daily (XR)	2,500 mg (IR) 2,000 mg (XR)	Maximum dose 2,000 mg/day	Do not start; if taking evaluate risk/benefit, reduce dose by 50% with maximum 1,000 mg/day*	×	×
/lureas	glipizide	5 mg; 2.5 mg in elderly	40 mg (IR) 20 mg (XR)	2.5 mg/day, slow titration	2.5 mg/day, slow titration	••	••
Sulfonylureas	glimepiride	1 – 2 mg	8 mg	1 mg/day, slow titration	••	••	×

^{*}Monitor renal function more frequently.

Class	Medication	Starting	Maximum		Action if eGFR (mL/min/1.73m²)
Class	ivieuication	daily dose	daily dose	> 45 to < 60	> 30 to < 45	> 15 to < 30	< 15 or ESRD
ıs	alogliptin	25 mg	25 mg	12.5 mg/day ••	12.5 mg/day ••	6.25 mg/day ••	6.25 mg/day ••
inhibitors	linagliptin	5 mg	5 mg	√	√	√	✓
DPP-4 in	saxagliptin	2.5 – 5 mg	5 mg	✓	2.5 mg/day ••	2.5 mg/day ••	2.5 mg/day ••
Ö	sitagliptin	100 mg	100 mg	✓	50 mg/day ••	25 mg/day ••	25 mg/day ••
Q	pioglitazone	15 – 30 mg§	45 mg	✓	✓	√	✓
TZD	rosiglitazone	4 mg	8 mg	√	√	✓	✓

Formulary medications in bold. § Check liver function tests before starting. Use 15mg daily as starting dose if NYHA class 1 or 2. Green (✓): no adjustment needed; Yellow (••): dose reduction, limited data, or use with caution; dosing guidance provided when available; Red (✗): avoid or contraindicated.

Renal dosing for glucose-lowering medications^{1,14-33}

Class	Medication	Starting	Maximum	Action if eGFR (mL/min/1.73m²)					
Class	Medication	daily dose	daily dose	> 45 to < 60	> 30 to < 45	> 15 to < 30	< 15 or ESRD		
inhibitors	canagliflozin	100 mg	300 mg	100 mg/day maximum	100 mg/day maximum	×	X		
·	dapagliflozin	5 mg	10 mg	1	×	×	×		
SGLT-2	empagliflozin [¥]	10 mg	25 mg	1	1	×	×		
	ertugliflozin	5 mg	15 mg	×	×	×	×		

Formulary medications in bold. Green (✓): no adjustment needed; Yellow (••): dose reduction, limited data, or use with caution; dosing guidance provided when available; Red (✗): avoid or contraindicated.

¥ Note: In EMPA-REG and CREDENCE (canagliflozin), the lower limit for inclusion in the trials was an eGFR of 30mL/min/1.73m². The product labeling for empagliflozin recommends not to initiate empagliflozin if eGFR is less 45 or to discontinue if eGFR falls persistently below 45. The rationale for the labeling is that the glycemic effect is substantially reduced at lower eGFRs.

Class	Medication	Starting	Maximum	Acti	on if eGFR (n	nL/min/1.73n	n²)
Class	iviedication	daily dose	daily dose	> 45 to < 60	> 30 to < 45	> 15 to < 30	< 15 or ESRD
	dulaglutide	0.75 mg weekly	1.5 mg weekly	✓	1	1	••
agonists	exenatide	10 mcg	20 mcg	Can be used if eGFR 50-80 mL/ min/1.73 m ²	••	×	X
	exenatide XR 2 mcg weekly		2 mcg weekly	✓	X	X	X
receptor	liraglutide 0.6 mg		1.8 mg	1	1	1	Limited data
LP-1	lixisenatide	10 mcg	20 mcg	✓	1	••	X
G.	inj. semaglutide	0.25 mg weekly	1 mg weekly	✓	1	1	✓
	oral semaglutide	3 mg	14 mg	√	1	1	✓

Combining diabetes agents^{1,2}

	DPP-4 inhibitors	GLP-1 agonists	Insulin	Metformin	SGLT-2 inhibitors	SU	TZDs
DPP-4 inhibitors		X	1	✓	✓	✓	✓
GLP-1 agonists	X		/ *	1	√	✓	✓
Insulin	✓	√ *		1	1	!	!
Metformin	✓	✓	1		1	✓	✓
SGLT-2 inhibitors	✓	√	1	1		√	✓
SU	✓	√	!	1	1		✓
TZDs	✓	√	!	1	1	✓	

✓: Safe to use together; !: Use with caution. SU + insulin has an increased rate of hypoglycemia, stop SU when prandial insulin used. TZD (pioglitazone) + insulin can cause edema at high insulin doses and in patients with heart failure, avoid using rosiglitazone + insulin. X: Avoid combining. *The data for GLP-1 agonists in combination with both basal and prandial insulin or with U500 insulin are very limited at present. Concomitant use of GLP-1 agonists with regimens containing basal insulin AND prandial insulin (including premixed formulations) or with U500 may be done on a case-by-case basis in consultation with an endocrinologist or diabetes specialist.

Basal insulin initiation*1



Basal insulin Initial dose 10 units or 0.1 to 0.2 units/kg once daily Titrate basal insulin 1 to 15% weekly or 2 units every 3 days based on self-monitored FPG Titrate basal insulin 1 thypoglycemia observed on self-monitored FPG

Basal insulin: NPH, detemir, glargine 100µ/mL, and degludec

^{*}Individualize insulin regimen based on Veteran-specific factors and glucose measurements.

Hypoglycemia^{1,2}

- Glucose alert value: < 70 mg/dL
- Clinically significant hypoglycemia: ≤ 54 mg/dL
- **Severe hypoglycemia:** associated with severe cognitive impairment requiring external assistance for recovery.
- Treatment: 15-20 gm glucose or equivalent, recheck BG in 15 minutes and repeat until BG ≥ 70, then have meal or snack to prevent recurrence of hypoglycemia.



 Severe hypoglycemia treatment: glucagon emergency kit or IV dextrose by emergency medical services.

What is 15-20 gm of glucose?

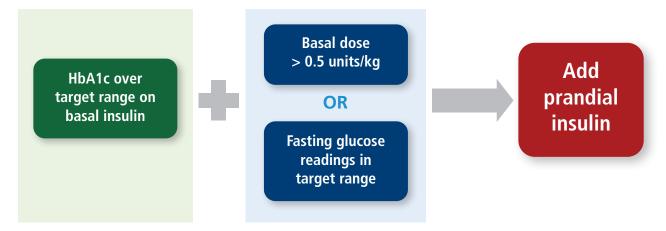
Glucose tablets or gel can be used. Look at label to determine the number of grams. Other sources that can raise blood glucose guickly:

- ✓ 4 ounces (1/2 cup) juice or regular soda
- ✓ 1 tablespoon honey, corn syrup, or sugar
- ✓ 2 tablespoons raisins





Adding prandial insulin¹



Adding prandial insulin¹ (continued)

Starting prandial insulin

- Start with one dose before the largest meal of the day.
- Begin with 4 units a day or 10% of basal dose.
- If HbA1c is < 8% then consider lowering basal dose by 4 units a day or 10%.

Home BG or HbA1c over target



Titrating prandial insulin

- Increase dose by 1 to 2 units or 10 to 15% twice weekly.
- If having hypoglycemia, determine the cause (e.g., missed meal, exercise).
 - If no clear reason, then lower corresponding dose by 10 to 20%.

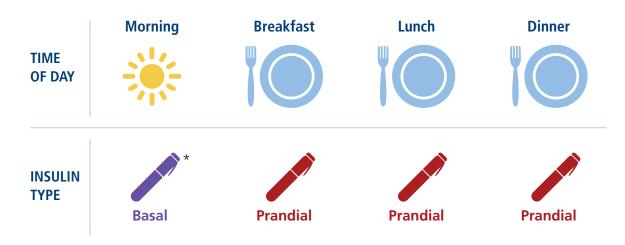
HbA1c over target range



Adding prandial doses

- Start with adding a second prandial dose and follow titration schedule.
- Recheck HbA1c in 3 months.
- If HbA1c still elevated. add a third prandial insulin dose.

Sample day with basal and prandial insulin



^{*}May need basal insulin two times daily depending on dose and type.

Visit planning guide¹

Past medical	and family history	Follow-up visits	Annual visit
	Personal history of complications and comorbidities		
	Macrovascular and microvascular		✓
	Hypoglycemia (awareness, frequency, causes, timing of episodes)	✓	✓
	High blood pressure or abnormal lipids		✓
	Last dental exam		✓
	Last dilated eye exam		√
	Visits to specialist		✓
	Changes in medical/family history	✓	✓
Technology u	se	Follow-up visits	Annual visit
~	Glucose monitoring (meter/CGM): results and data use	1	1

Lifestyle factors		Follow-up visits	Annual visit
~ .	Eating patterns and weight history	✓	✓
000	Physical activity and sleep behaviors	✓	✓
	Tobacco, alcohol, and substance use		✓
Medications and vaccinations		Follow-up visits	Annual visit
	Current medication regimen	✓	✓
Medication taking behavior	Medication taking behavior	✓	✓
₽ _k ≡	Medication intolerance or side effects	✓	✓
	Complementary and alternative medicine use	✓	✓
	Vaccination history and needs		✓

Visit planning guide¹

Behavioral and diabetes self-management skills		Follow-up visits	Annual visit
	Screen for depression, anxiety, and disordered eating; refer for further assessment or intervention if warranted		1
45/	Consider assessment for cognitive impairment at age 65 or older		1
	History of Medical Nutrition Therapy visit with a dietitian and diabetes self-management education visits/classes	1	1
	 Assess for food insecurity: In the past 3 months, have you ever run out of food and were not able to access more food or have the money to buy more food? 	1	√
	Assess diabetes self-management skills and barriers		✓
	For women of childbearing capacity, review contraceptive needs and preconception planning	1	√

Physical examin	ation	Follow-up visits	Annual visit
	Height, weight, and BMI	✓	✓
	Blood pressure measurement	✓	✓
	Thyroid palpation		✓
	Skin examination (e.g., acanthosis nigricans, insulin injection or insertion sites, lipodystrophy)	1	✓
	 Comprehensive foot examination: Visual inspection (e.g., skin integrity, callous formation, foot deformity or ulcer, toenails) 	/ *	√
	Screen for peripheral arterial disease		✓
	Determination of temperature, vibration, or pinprick sensation, and 10-g monofilament exam		✓

^{*}Should be performed every visit in Veterans with sensory loss, previous foot ulcers, or amputations.

Visit planning guide¹

Laboratory eva		Follow-up visits	Annual visit
	HbA1c, if not available in the past 3 months	✓	✓
	Discuss the target HbA1c range with the Veteran	✓	✓
	If not performed/available within the past year:		
	Lipid profile, including total, LDL, and HDL cholesterol and triglycerides		√
	Liver function tests		✓
	Spot urinary albumin-to-creatinine ratio		✓
	Serum creatinine and estimated glomerular filtration rate		✓
	Vitamin B12 if on metformin (when indicated)		✓
	 Serum potassium levels in patients on ACE inhibitors, ARBs, or diuretics 		√

Resources

VA/DoD guides

- VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for the Management of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus in Primary Care (2017): www.healthquality.va.gov/ guidelines/cd/diabetes
- VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for the Diagnosis and Management of Hypertension in the Primary Care Setting (2020): www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/cd/htn/
- VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for the Management of Chronic Kidney Disease (2019): www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/cd/ckd/

VA programs

- VA Hypoglycemia Safety Initiative: www.qualityandsafety.va.gov/ChoosingWiselyHealth SafetyInitiative/HypoglycemiaSite/Hypoglycemia.asp
- VA PAVE (Prevention of Amputation for Veterans Everywhere): www.va.gov/VHAPUBLICATIONS/ ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=5364

Tools/videos

- How to Give Yourself a Subcutaneous Injection: www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXjQHAxopzk
- American College of Cardiology ASCVD Plus Tool: tools.acc.org/ASCVD-Risk-Estimator-Plus

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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

This reference guide was created to be used as a tool for VA providers and is available to use from the Academic Detailing SharePoint. These are general recommendations only; specific clinical decisions should be made by treating provider based on an individual patient's clinical conditions.

VA PBM Academic Detailing Service Email Group:

PharmacyAcademicDetailingProgram@va.gov

VA PBM Academic Detailing Service SharePoint Site:

https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/vhaacademicdetailing/SitePages/Home.aspx

VA PBM Academic Detailing Service Public Website:

http://www.pbm.va.gov/PBM/academicdetailingservicehome.asp

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